

Transcription: Dallas Shannon

Today's date is Thursday, August 5th, 2010. My name is James Crabtree and I'll be interviewing Mr. Dallas Shannon. This interview is being conducted by phone. I'm at the General Land Office Building in Austin, Texas, and Mr. Shannon is at his home in Temple, Texas. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Sir, thank you for taking the time to talk to us today. It's an honor for us. First question I guess, best place to start is maybe tell us just a little bit about your childhood and your life before you entered the military.

Dallas Shannon: I was born in Springfield, Tennessee in 1922, out on a farm and my father was a tobacco farmer. Around 2 years of age, my father decided to move to El Dorado, Arkansas, because there was an oil boom on. He had a brother that lived in El Dorado, so we moved to El Dorado, and during that time, we lived there, and I lived there until I was about 17 years old. I had joined the Arkansas National Guard, the 206th Coast Artillery Anti-Aircraft, and with my parent's permission. Then we were called into federal service on January 1st, 1941. At that time, we were sent to Fort Bliss, Texas. I was there approximately three months and we got orders to report overseas and my battalion of that unit was assigned a job we found out in the Aleutian Islands. I was in the Aleutian Islands from August 1941 until between June and July of 1943, at a time when the Japanese had entered the chain below Dutch Harbor, Alaska, and we were bombed two days in a row in June of '43, and lost a few men. From there, I was selected to come from my unit and come back to the United States. I may be getting a little out of order here as far as you're concerned. If you want me to stop, let me know.

Well yeah, let me ask you a little bit more before we go too far – in your childhood, what was it that made you want to join the military?

Dallas Shannon: I don't know. I always thought it was something my father had been in the Tennessee Unit during the first World War with Sergeant York, and so I don't know if they were personal friends, but they knew each other.

That's amazing. I don't think a lot of people unfortunately nowadays know about Sergeant Alvin York, but he was really hero, and so as a child I guess you had heard stories about Sergeant York.

Dallas Shannon: Oh yes, and apparently I thought at that time, you know, many people did not think very much of the military in that day, back in the mid-30s, say like '36, 1937 we went to Wisconsin to summer camp and people would get their children, or their girls especially, because there was a bunch of boys, you know, in trucks, and they would yell and holler at you and this type of thing. Mothers would get 'em, grab 'em and bring 'em inside. You know, you don't want to talk to those boys. They're in the Army, that type of thing.

What did your dad tell you about his service in World War I? Did he talk to you much about that?

Dallas Shannon: Not an awful lot. If I asked him, he would tell me. The only thing, he said I never saw so much blood in his life. Of course he had lived on a farm, you know, previous to that time, and when he came home, he and my mother married on Christmas Day 1918 I think it was. I was always, my father in his business in El Dorado, Arkansas, was across the street from

another gentleman who was the CO of the unit that I eventually got into when I joined the National Guard. It worked out real well, you know.

Kind of a small world in that case. So when you joined up, did you have any brothers or sisters?

Dallas Shannon: I had a brother, but he was six years younger than me and after I got in, he said something about joining the Army, but then he couldn't decide really but eventually he decided, he enlisted and he was in less than six months and his wife had a real hard problem with birth and they got him out for some reason or another and he never did go back in the service. I only had the one brother. I don't think he even got out of basic really. If he did, it's a mystery if he got out.

So when you signed up at 17, you said you had to get your parent's permission. Was that a hard thing to do?

Dallas Shannon: They supported. In fact when the second World War, when they were enlisting people, I went down to Shreveport, Louisiana, from El Dorado, my mother took me down there, and I went to the recruiting office to join the Marines. My dad says well, you couldn't have joined a better place. Well, after the physical they came out and they said well, you passed everything, but your wisdom teeth don't match or something like that, so your bite is no good so we can't enlist you.

Oh that's tough.

Dallas Shannon: That's how strict they were at that time.

That was after Pearl Harbor had been bombed?

Dallas Shannon: No, no, this was before, way before.

That's right, because when you were, because you went into the Army National Guard and you were actually on the Aleutian Island chain when Pearl Harbor was bombed, right? Tell us how you learned about Pearl Harbor being attacked.

Dallas Shannon: Well, we most of us had a little short wave radio, either with the unit or some of the boys were smart enough that they made their own. They listened and there was quite a stir about people of course about Japan at the time, even though they had not done anything to us, to the United States, but after they started the war, then they bombed Pearl Harbor, I think I was on the lookout and my unit, we had posted around, in Dutch Harbor, and our lookout was up on the top of Mount Ballyhoo which is talked about in Jack London's book, one of his books there in Dutch Harbor, and we found out about that, and there was concern, the thing that was really so bad, I say bad, well we had been observing on Sunday but then they decided well, we're gonna change. We're gonna have a day off on Wednesday, and they changed and everything was done, had skeleton crews on the guns and everything on that Wednesday, and about 6 o'clock in the morning they heard a problem and they found out that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor earlier. For a while we didn't have many communications other than people coming in, or a lot of time the radio wouldn't work, this type of thing.

So there was some thought that they might be coming to attack you as well, right?

Dallas Shannon: Well yes, and eventually of course they did. After we got up there, I think the Japanese landed on Adak and Kisko out on the end of the chain, and of course if they had known it, they could've probably just marched right up the chain right into Alaska proper through the islands there, because there was nobody there to stop 'em. In Dutch Harbor there was one company I think it was the 3rd Infantry was there.

Just a company.

Dallas Shannon: Yes, and there was I think 40 Marines and some Navy boys, and then there was a naval PBV out, had I think about 6 or 8 planes there.

So not very much fortification.

Dallas Shannon: No. What fortifications there was there, we dug ourselves pretty much in-ground and in fact our Quonset hut they dug out with a front end loader and this type of thing, and everything was, in fact we went from the mess hall through the headquarters, the supply room, this type of thing, on tunnels that we had made on the side of the mountain. But we were bombed and of course I guess we all had foxholes and they would pin us two days in a row, June the 3rd and June the 4th I believe it was of '43. They were real concerned, and we stayed on alert for I think it was 72 hours or a little bit longer than that, and then they finally decided well, they weren't coming and the next thing we know, we got word that the PBV's that were stationed at Dutch Harbor there had run the Japanese ships off. They had bombed some of the ships out in that area enough to, I don't think they had any direct hits, but they made it hot enough that they decided they better leave I guess.

So what was a typical day like for you while you were on the Aleutians? Was it a lot of pulling watch duty on anti-aircraft guns and that sort of thing or doing patrols?

Dallas Shannon: Well there were some. There was one air strip there in Dutch Harbor, and they eventually had to lengthen it because some of the units couldn't land. Now they finally made it so that fighters can land there, and I don't think there was none around at Dutch Harbor when the Japanese bombed us. The only thing that persuaded them to leave I think as I said was the naval PBV units that were there, and the stars and stripes came out some days later. We got a chance to copy 'em and look at 'em, and had talked about the Marines and the Navy defending Dutch Harbor. And they did, you know. Of course the boys that were on the gun emplacements for the coast artillery unit we had shot down I think it was either three or four planes, had to their credit when they got through with their soiree with Dutch Harbor and then they took off back out to sea and never did come back.

And you said at some point you went back to the States because you were selected for more training?

Dallas Shannon: Yeah, I was a private when I went up there. Then I was promoted pretty much up the ladder right quick. I was a sergeant first class and they selected me to go back and help form a unit. Of course I wasn't back and I was at Camp Pond, California, and was assigned to a Triple A unit, and during that time, that was like in '44, late '44, they finally decided well, over in the European Theater they didn't need any more anti aircraft units, had plenty, so they said we're gonna send you up to Camp House, Texas, and we're gonna make an Infantryman out of you. So that's the way I got into the infantry pretty much.

You went from being a basic enlisted private to a first sergeant? In how short a period, a couple of years?

Dallas Shannon: Yeah.

That's pretty amazing.

Dallas Shannon: Yeah it was. Well, I had a friend who was a CO of a unit in Camden, Arkansas, and he was in the same area that we were in at Dutch Harbor, and I guess of course he was much older than I was at the time, and we had quite a friendship, and I don't know that that was everything, but I was in communications and made a corporal. Then they decided they wanted me in the supply room and at that time, the Department of the Army decided that anybody in supply area should be a staff sergeant. So I was promoted to staff sergeant. Then through hook or crook they had me promoted to sergeant first class.

That's a pretty meteoric rise.

Dallas Shannon: Yes it certainly was. In fact, I was one of the youngest ones around I guess. Then I went back and I was in charge of a unit in Camp Pond where they were sending young men overseas, younger than me at the time. But anyway, they sent us up to, I became an Infantryman, and then they sent us from there back to Camp Pond, California.

Where was Camp Pond located?

Dallas Shannon: Camp Pond was at Riverside.

In Riverside, OK. So I imagine it was close then to what later became March Air Force Base?

Dallas Shannon: Yeah, right across the road.

OK, I know right where that is. I actually did some training there before I went to Iraq. They had an old, had been a housing area when the March Air Force Base was bigger, and used that for urban training.

Dallas Shannon: You know, and then I eventually I got to Camp Fannin, Texas, which was at Tyler, in an NCO school, for some reason or another, and I was there for a few weeks and I decided well, I thought I think I'm gonna see if I can go to Bening and be an officer. Well, I applied for it and was accepted, and went to Fort Bening, and I guess in '44 and then graduated in early '45, and was sent to Camp Walker at the time, and I guess it's Fort Walker now, Camp Walker, Alabama. I got out of the service for about a year.

After the war ended?

Dallas Shannon: Yes, I got out in December '45. I was out a year. But then I decided about a year later I'd go back in the service, or apply to, which I did and at that time I was second lieutenant, and I said well, can I get back in? Well, when I applied they said well, we'll let you reenlist as a sergeant first class. So I went through the ropes again and was at a burn hospital in Pasadena, California and was recruiting sergeant.

So they took away your commission as a lieutenant?

Dallas Shannon: Well, they didn't take it away. I just hadn't applied. I just reenlisted, you know. And after I reenlisted, they decided they would let some of the officers back in, or let them reapply for their commission or whatever you want to call it. And so I did that and I was set for Fort Ord, and from Fort Ord I went down to Fort Bliss. I was at Fort Bliss, supposed to go to guided missile school, and I wound up, the school I was way-layed, a couple of days late getting there, so they said well, we'll let you start in next Sambo class that's ____, you know. So they said well in the meantime you can work in the officer's mess. You can run the officer's mess. They didn't have a best officer for the officer's mess there. So that was my job for a year. I finally wrote a letter to the DA at the time and said I'd like to be reassigned to my original branch which is infantry and get out of the artillery. Well they wrote me back and said we can't, artillery won't turn you loose. Well 10 days later I got a wire from DA says you've been ordered to go there in California, Travis, you know, and catch a plane to Korea. So that's what I did.

And when was this?

Dallas Shannon: This was in 1950.

Were you married during this point?

Dallas Shannon: Oh yeah, my wife and I, if we make it until next May we'll have been married 70 years.

Wow, congratulations. That's great. So you had gotten married then -

Dallas Shannon: After I came into the service in 1941, I entered the service in January and we got married in May, and I didn't see my wife for three years.

Was she back in Texas?

Dallas Shannon: No, she was an Arkansas girl. We grew up and both went to the same high school.

In El Dorado, yes sir. What did she think about you going back into the military?

Dallas Shannon: She didn't want me to get out the first time. But I thought well, I told her, I said well we'll try and see. I was toying with the idea of trying to go to state highway patrol in the state of California later, and then that didn't work, so I was eventually assigned after I came back from Korea to Fort Camp Roberts, and I was there at Camp Roberts for about two years in charge of a basic training unit eventually, and I was also a G-3 in general headquarters there at Camp Roberts, working for General Robert F. Sake, and I got orders to go up to Fort Louis and got up there and met a friend who I had known years earlier and he said, what are you doing up here? I told him and he said, he turned around to some guy and said this guy needs to be in the artillery. I said come on. Anyway they eventually assigned me to that artillery unit there, and the general got transferred from Roberts up to Fort Louis and he came on an inspection and he came around to my unit and he looked at me and he said what are you doing out here in the line? I said that's where they assigned me. He turned around to his aide and said when we get back, you cut orders for Shannon to come back to headquarters in G-3. I said oh God. So I didn't argue with him, you know. And so I left there of course and went to an associate course at Bening in '53 I guess, and then in '54 went to Germany with my wife and family and my

daughter and son, was in Germany for three years. I was in Augsburg to start with, was in 10th Infantry and they got orders to rotate, and at that time, and I said can I rotate? No, you're not gonna rotate. So I went from S-3 in that unit to an assignment at a little place called – I can't think of the name of it now.

Sir I was going to ask you, you got out, you retired from the Army.

Dallas Shannon: Yes I did, in 1962.

And what was your rank when you got out?

Dallas Shannon: Major.

Major. And I guess one thing I want to talk to you about too is Korea, because I know that's a war that has been forgotten, or a lot of people never did forget about it because they didn't really know about it.

Dallas Shannon: Well yeah, you know, well the second World War, this ended and people referred to it from pretty much as a police action. I don't think United States ever declared war on anybody during the Korean War, but they wound up with the infantry units over there, they wound up with a lot of different countries sent in men, and I think totally there was, even I think there was something like 38,000 men that were either killed, wounded, K-I or W-I, whatever. People, they didn't think much about it really, and until it started, most people didn't even know where Korea was. Just about like the Aleutian Islands when I went up there, you'd say something to people about it and they would say well where is that?

What were your first impressions of Korea when you arrived there?

Dallas Shannon: I wondered how people, and they had a real nice university there in Pouson where I was sent, and I was a member of a headquarter second log command, and I had a friend that had been in the military police and he said what are you gonna do over here? I said well they assigned me as a mess officer. He said you're not gonna be an old mess officer. I'll see to that. So he had me assigned and I was what they refer to as a CPO, city patrol officer, in the city of Pouson with a Korean Marine and a GI from the military police unit and myself, and we would ride around either stopping fights or getting people off of AWOL lists and whatever. I was there from like October 1950 until I guess it was probably March, I had a friend that was an AG and he called me one night about 11 o'clock and said you better come see me. I've got some orders for you. I said OK. I went up there and he says you've been assigned to the 2nd Division. I thought uh-oh. All you can hear about then was that was about the time the North Koreans pretty well pushed everybody back towards coming off of the peninsula, you know, and pushing them out of Pouson, and I said no, they're not going to do that. General said no, we'll go around and go back the other way, which he did. Of course MacArthur nearly did, I guess when Truman let him go, and told him that he was not doing what he was told, it kind of I don't know, a lot of people were quite concerned over it.

I know it was very unpopular in the United States.

Dallas Shannon: Oh yeah, but anyway, and I went up to the, I was taken up to the 2nd Division 1st Battalion 38th Infantry, and they said you're going to be assigned to Company A. So I went up and at that time they were getting ready to start a march back forward as much as possible.

Were they making you a company commander?

Dallas Shannon: Yes I was. Basically I was an Exec in Company A under Lieutenant Omman who was General Omman's son. General Omman had been in the 7th Army over in Europe, but his son was commander of that unit, and I don't guess we went half a dozen miles on this forest march we were on, and his feet gave out on him, and they said well he's got to go to the rear. You will be the CO. Just like that. I said OK, if that's it. We went along for a long time and I was the only officer there, and most of the stuff that I had were the master sergeants and the platoon sergeant I had that were so tremendous and helpful for me, more than – a couple of times I had a, well I'll say the first time I had a first lieutenant assigned to me and I'd only been a first lieutenant maybe 8 months or so when I got over there, and this guy had been a first lieutenant for some time and he was from La Pointe, so they made him my Exec. He was there about three weeks. They sent him to the rear. Then the next thing you know I had a captain assigned as my executive officer. I said come on, how come he's not CO? Well, and I don't know what the excuse was. Then the next thing I know, he gets orders to leave the unit and he's going back to Division rear to run the newspaper, another Pointe man, Bringnotter. That's OK, if that's the way they do it, that's fine, but it upset me quite a bit to do that, but at the time I just, but as far as the people, if you can find some families there, most of them were pretty honest, when you ask about the condition of the country and there's a lot of people that were out for themselves. For example, I was assigned to a military police unit there until I went to the 2nd Division, and we had two areas in Pousson. One was called Little Chicago and one was called St. Louis, and you could get any black market thing in those generally we'll say square areas of blocks of the town, anything you'd want, anywhere from a pistol to if you wanted a jeep, they'd have you a jeep, whatever. And we'd get Korean Marines and our military police unit and we'd surround one area or the other, and go through there and we'd wind up most of the time 10 or 12, deuce and a half ____, either clothing or material or something that belonged to GI's or to the troops, and most nearly every time, if something came in on a ship at Pousson that was for the troops, the black market people would have it off that ship and in one of those black market places before the troops ever got it, before we could ever get it out and get it to 'em. And how they did it I don't know, but boy they were good at it. Other than that, and of course when I was there I tried my best, there was a family that I was trying to help, a little boy, my unit got him new clothes, new shoes, you know, and he used to run around the RTO, the train center there downtown, and we got him all dressed up. Next day he was back in his same old stuff. He'd gone ahead and sold those clothes and stuff and people were like that, you know.

What were your troops like? Were any of them draftees? In your company?

Dallas Shannon: Oh yeah, I'm sure they were. They were all good men though. In fact after I got home and I joined and got out, I joined the 2nd Infantry Division group that has a yearly reunion, and I got a letter from a young man. He said I want to know if you're the same Shannon that commanded that company. I said yeah, I wrote him back and told him yeah. And we struck up a friendship but I still correspond with the guy, and that's 60 years ago that he knew me. But there was quite a few of them, I guess the one time that I could think of, you know, boys, young men, it's not like it is over in Iraq with the in and out, in and out. Of course they stayed there, well myself I stayed there about a year, a little over a year, but I did get a chance to go on three days R&R to Tokyo, and that was done. And of course, guys when they do that, some of them got kind of lax about their duty and watching what they're supposed to do and they would go over there and have a good time, and come back, kind of let things go a little bit, and before you know it they would wind up getting wooed into bets, and one guy told me one time he

said I think I would've been better off if I just stayed here and paid attention to what I was supposed to be doing. But the country itself, I told my wife, I said if you could see it before it all got torn apart and everything shot up, it was a beautiful country as far as the countryside is concerned, and they were primitive in many ways, but still there were some real nice people over there. I served in Pousson at a time when they had a provost, his name was Pragar Kim, and he always had quite a reputation about being a pretty sorry, Korean guy. Whether he was or not, he always treated us pretty well, and I don't know what he did with his own people, but the Korean military, we had, my unit helped relieve on the punch bowl one time, and we got up and went into position and got up there and here's a squad of men and they're standing at attention and someone is behind 'em with a big glim, and he'd ask them a question and if they didn't, if he didn't think the answer came correctly, he'd let 'em have it on the rear end with that stick, you know. I mean it wasn't just lightly. I don't even see how some of the guys could even walk off. He went through that about 30 minutes and then finally decided, I guess he'd heard all he wanted to and had 'em dismissed and they took off. But they were unmerciful I thought when it came, when I was in Pousson and we'd go around to different places, you know, and we'd be asked or told to go to some particular place and we'd drive up there and the Korean Marine would get out and he'd go to the door and we'd go with him, and if they didn't, if people didn't come to the door quick enough, he'd bash it in and knock the door in, and if they came out and didn't give him the right answer, he'd back up and let 'em have one in the stomach or the side or wherever it happened to be. I don't care whether it's a man, woman or whatever, and that's the only thing I hated about part of their culture. But other than that, they had some tremendous people over there. I guess there still is just like in every country.

One thing I really wanted to ask you about, too, was in that story it talks about your actions that you were awarded the Silver Star for which is a very high honor, and the story said and obviously you don't brag about it, but for our interview, maybe you could tell us a little about that day and that situation.

Dallas Shannon: Well we were part of the force, and I don't know if you've heard of Hardpoint Bridge, this was the early stages of heartbreak I guess, and it had been raining and it was muddy and anyway, we came to this, number of the hill right now, I think it was, I don't know, there were so many numbers, it was 9 something I think, 940 or 740 or something like that, but regardless, a unit of the 23rd had been kind of pinned down and they wanted somebody to relieve 'em, so it happened to be my unit. We went up there and we got, they were pretty well fortified on this bridge, and I couldn't seem to move, and I got up as close as I could and got with a machine gunner and he kept getting his head up, and I said keep your head down. There's too many people up there for you to be exposing yourself like this. Well, I hadn't hardly got that out of my mouth until he was shot right between the eyes, I mean turned just as white as a sheet, you know. One of the sergeants behind me, I said bring me a 60 millimeter mortar. OK, so he came back and said sir, said it'll take a few minutes, and I said well OK, but I need it now. Come back, and I said OK, let me have a base plate and a tripod. Don't have one. What do you mean you don't have it? Well I threw it away. It was too heavy so they didn't want to carry it.

Really?

Dallas Shannon: Yeah. That was their answer. I said well how about a tube, anybody got a tube? Yeah, we got the tube. I said well, I know what we can do about it. Well anyway, I said bring it to me, I'm going to use it some way or another. So when they brought it up there, only thing I could do was to set the base of the tube in the bud and I myself guided the tube just like it was my arms were the tripod, was the tripod you know. And I had a man drop around and we

dropped a couple of rounds, and I'd have to keep trying to adjust it, just moving the tube with my hand, and I'd have to pull the tube up every once in a while because it kept sinking in the mud. But anyway -

What time of year was this? Was it summer?

Dallas Shannon: This was in July, yes.

I guess you had to fire those rounds, drop those rounds, because you were virtually being overrun, is that right?

Dallas Shannon: Right, that's correct. And then we had to do that and we were trying to take the ridge, as you know, probably if you've read much about Heartbreak, but they got to the point where I guess the lens that I was trying to get in on their position, I kept adjusting and pulling back towards us and I finally told the guys there on the line with me, I said I can't pull this tube back any more. If I do, I'm gonna land these rounds right on top of us. So anyway, apparently I must've done some good because they pretty well got, I went ahead and took the unit, took the position, and somebody later says, and I had no idea, I didn't know anything had been done about it, and we got back and somebody said hey, lieutenant, I understand you're gonna get the Silver Star. I said what are you talking about? Well somebody saw it, and they told me who it was, had made a written story up on the action, you know, and I thought well, I think you're full of baloney. Well, just a few weeks later it came out, you know. And then when I came home, I was assigned to Camp Roberts, and in 19 July '52, the Secretary of Defense, Frank Pace, as at the camp with General Swing and a bunch of other people, and a young man from Pasadena, California - at that time, my folks lived in Monrovia, California - got the DSC, and they wanted to know if we would object to having our medals presented to us. Of course both of us said well, certainly not. But anyway and that's when, that's about all I know to tell you about it. People say well, I've got a friend who was post engineer when I was as, over Suvario, over Germany, and I've known him for 50 years. He said well you didn't tell me you had the Silver Star. I said hey, you don't go around in conversation and say hey, do you know I got the Silver Star? You just don't do that.

No, unless you want people to think bad of you. I understand.

Dallas Shannon: I've gotten some real nice notes from people here in Temple, whom I've known for a long time. A sergeant who's done about three or four ____ on me since I've lived here, got a letter from he and his wife said well we always knew you had something in you.

Well it is such a high honor, and you describe it real matter of factly, but I think anybody that knows anything about combat or where you were knows that that was a heroic moment.

Dallas Shannon: One thing I might mention to you, and I didn't do it, it might not be the right place, but when I re-enlisted that second time and was assigned to that burn unit in Pasadena, McCornick General Hospital was the place where I was sent as a recruiting sergeant, and I looked up one day and here's this colonel standing at the door said I understand you might be interested in an ROTC job. I said well sure. He said if you'll go out, I'll see that you are promoted to master sergeant within 60 days. I guarantee you I got it in 60 days just like that. And it was just something that I was very fortunate in my career. I went to Korea, went to the Aleutian campaign, what little bit of action I saw other than being bombed up there by the Japanese, and all I got was amoebic dysentery, but that's bad enough.

Well to go back sir a little bit to the time in Korea, the incidents where you were awarded a Silver Star, had your unit and yourself been in contact up until that point? Had you been in any other situations fighting or was that the first? It was pretty routine?

Dallas Shannon: Well, oh no, we had ____ was in well, I'm trying to remember where we started from outside of Pousson and was pushed back north and had to force march 30 miles fighting on each side of the highway or MSR, whatever you want to call it, into a little town they called Inje, and saw action there, and along the way. Just as a sideline we got to Ridge one day on the side of the road and I told the guys, this is when they would try to pick guys out of these foxholes that they had dug in the side of the hill, you know, and try to get 'em out of there or kill 'em or whatever. I said OK, let's go. I had about oh, I guess a squad or two squads, and I said let's get those nests cleaned out. So we started out down that ridge and the fire got pretty hot, and I turned around and the guys said lieutenant, it's too hot down here. I said what do you mean? They said well we're gonna get hit. I said well, the next thing you knew they turned around and were going back up the hill and I'm standing there by myself, and I started running back up the hill. They started laughing and said every time I took a step, they shot right where my feet had been. That's about all I can tell you.

Wow. And when you're in a situation like that, especially that time that you were having to drop those mortar rounds, do you think it's a case that your training just kind of kicks in or do you remember thinking anything to yourself while that was happening? Or was it just simply a case of got to get these rounds on the enemy?

Dallas Shannon: Somebody said well, how'd you do that? And I told a young man that did the newspaper article, I said well, I don't want to use that old cliché about anybody would've done it, but I said somebody had to do it, and if it wasn't done then we had a problem, you know, the whole unit had a problem. So somebody had to think of something or do something, and at the time I thought it was necessary for me to do what I did, and I didn't think anything about it. Only thing that got me is when the young man I was laying next to before I got this mortar started that stuff, was the young machine gunner that got shot. That's the only thing that kind of shook me up a little bit, but I didn't, and the closest I guess that we ran I don't know what you'd call it, a gauntlet or whatever the gooks had zeroed in some little valley type thing that we had to cross, and I was standing on one side and every once in a while when I thought the rounds that they had fired would be enough for a few minutes, I'd send half a dozen men across or whatever, you know, and try and not get 'em all at the same time. I'm standing there and all of a sudden my left breast hurt, and I thought uh-oh, I've been hit. Well I looked and I had a red spot this round right above my left side of my chest, and the round dropped to the ground. It was spinning but it didn't enter my skin. That's about as close as I ever got. Of course I might've been closer. When I got amoebic dysentery over there, I went down and they kept saying you need to go back. How am I gonna go back? I can't hardly walk. Well we'll send some of the guys. So I went with some walking wounded. There was four guys and myself. This young man that sent me said hey, why don't we get a hold of battalion and have them turn the searchlights on? So they got the searchlights on and banked 'em off of clouds, just like turning the lights on in a city. Of course it didn't help us any as far as being targets were concerned. We were shot at a few times but none of us were hit, which I thought was very odd. But other than that, from time to time, yeah, we went out and we were out 10 days at a time or a week at a time, and whatever we were sent for, either dig up somebody or try to start a fire fight or whatever.

Were you able to get much news from home from your wife? Were you able to send letters and things pretty regularly?

Dallas Shannon: Oh yeah, oh sure.

How did she cope with you being over there?

Dallas Shannon: Well, I had to leave her alone with a daughter who was 6 years old at the time, or 5 years old I guess, and of course she always knew that it was a possibility, regardless, how we felt about it, and we were fortunate enough to have the Lord protect us, and I know he does a lot of people, but sometimes it just doesn't work, and again, I was fortunate enough and she lived by herself with the daughter and she had a younger brother at the time who was just a teenager and he went and lived with her a little bit, but other than that, I think she made it all right.

I just know a lot of times people forget about the families back home. We talk about the troops, but I know it's very tough on the families and that says a lot that she was able to do that. Did you ever tell her, was it later that you told her about some of the actions like how you got the Silver Star and stuff?

Dallas Shannon: Yeah, it was. Even a lot of times now, people will try to pry it out of me. My grandson set up all this thing with the newspaper here several weeks ago. He's executive officer for a unit called Bell Anisers in Indianapolis, and he did all of that work, all the footwork and everything by phone from his home and from his office.

Well it really is a great story.

Dallas Shannon: Well thank you.

I'm glad that they were able to do that and I've glad to have been able to do this interview because it means a lot that future generations can hear these stories and learn from them and they're not forgotten, and the fact that it's right from you in your spoken words, I think it makes it more powerful to people that are listening to it.

Dallas Shannon: Well I thank you for calling me. I sure appreciate it.

And I want to tell you, too, that on behalf of Commissioner Patterson and everybody here at the Land Office, we're very thankful for your service to our country and this program is just a small way of saying thanks.

Dallas Shannon: Well if I can help you guys in any way, let me know.

Well if you know any veterans you think we should interview, just give them my number and have them call us.

Dallas Shannon: OK, I'll sure do it.

We're always trying to find veterans to interview, and like I mentioned before, we're going to send you copies of this interview on CDs and eventually the commissioner is going to sign a certificate and letter that we put in a nice binder that we'll send that to you as well.

Dallas Shannon: Oh great, that's great.

We'll send all that to you, and again sir, just thank you very much. It's been an honor.

Dallas Shannon: Well thank you so much for calling, and being patient with me.

Oh no sir, it's been a great interview, and honestly we've not had a whole lot of Korean War interviews because it seems like it's harder to find Korean War veterans or it's just like it seems to be a forgotten war, and so by interviewing you hopefully that helps fill a little bit of that hole, too.

Dallas Shannon: Well thank you so much.

Yes sir, well have a great day.

Dallas Shannon: All right, same to you.

[End of recording]